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Security Council

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Letter dated 11 February 2015 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to write to transmit to you a letter from the representative of the Syrian Coalition dated 11 February 2015 (see annex).

I would be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Mark **Lyall Grant**

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Annex to the letter dated 11 February 2015 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

On behalf of the National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces, it is with great alarm that I draw your attention to the slaughter currently unfolding in the Syrian suburb of Douma and the urgent need for comprehensive Security Council action to stop the Syrian regime's atrocities, before they result in further bloodshed.

Beginning on Thursday, 5 February 2015, the opposition-held suburb of Douma became the site of relentless indiscriminate aerial bombardment by Syrian regime forces. Throughout the past week, Syrian regime air forces have pounded this civilian-occupied area with brutal barrel bombs, in direct violation of the principles of discrimination and proportionality enshrined in international humanitarian law, and Security Council resolution 2139 (2014), which explicitly prohibited "the use of barrel bombs, and methods of warfare which are of a nature to cause superfluous injury or unnecessary suffering". These improvised explosive devices have indiscriminately killed, maimed and injured men, women and children.

On Friday, 6 February 2015, more than 60 Syrian regime aerial attacks on Douma resulted in the deaths of at least 82 people, of whom 18 were children. On Monday, 9 February 2015 — the same day that the United Nations Special Envoy for Syria arrived in Damascus to discuss a ceasefire in Aleppo — regime attacks in Douma killed 23 civilians and injured 70 others, the vast majority of whom were women and children. The following day, Assad told the BBC's Jeremy Bowen that the regime was not using barrel bombs, it was "defending the people", and its attacks were not indiscriminate: transparent lies that run contrary to a vast amount of independently verified evidence.

The attacks on Douma are part of a larger effort by the Syrian regime to eradicate all opposition and dissent in the besieged province in eastern Ghouta. Dissatisfied with its two-year siege of eastern Ghouta, the Syrian regime has chosen to ramp up its brutal efforts to kill any and all Syrians who dare to demand freedom. From 5 through 9 February, no less than 178 civilians were killed in eastern Ghouta, representing a staggering 80 per cent of the total death toll.

The Syrian regime's attacks on Douma and the whole of eastern Ghouta underline the urgent need for comprehensive international action to stem the rising death toll in Syria. The current airstrikes against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) will not succeed in degrading and destroying the extremist threat in Syria until the Security Council takes comprehensive action to address the chief cause of ISIL's proliferation: the brutality and lawlessness of the Assad regime. As long as the Syrian regime continues to commit atrocities with impunity in civilian-occupied areas like Douma, extremists will continue to exploit the hopelessness and discontent that the Syrian regime breeds.

It is critical that the Security Council take immediate steps to stop the violence in Douma and across Syria. In the immediate term, the Security Council must meet this week to: (i) discuss the situation in Douma and condemn the regime's use of

indiscriminate force; and (ii) express in writing its commitment to enforce international law, including Security Council resolutions, in Syria.

Beyond these immediate steps, the Security Council must do far more to ensure the protection of civilians in Syria in accordance with international law. A natural first step for the Council is to develop a new, strong and enforceable resolution that acts as a real deterrent against future atrocities. Resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014) are not being respected by the regime, nor are they enforced by the Security Council.

This is the very minimum that the Security Council should be doing. Assad's 10 February lies on the BBC reveal an obvious truth: without a deterrent, killers will continue to kill. Assad believes he can mislead the international community because there have been no consequences for his actions so far. This has to change. The Security Council has the power to generate such a change and open the way for a political solution to the crisis on the basis of the transition established by the Geneva communiqué.

(*Signed*) Najib **Ghadbian**
Special Representative of the Syrian Coalition
to the United Nations